



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Boqueron Field Office  
P.O. Box 491  
Boqueron, Puerto Rico 00622

03.01-2/4/02-02152



February 4, 2002

Mr. Chris Penny  
Atlantic Division  
Code EV23  
1510 Gilbert St  
Norfolk, VA 23511-2699

Re: Vieques Background Investigation Report

Dear Mr. Penny:

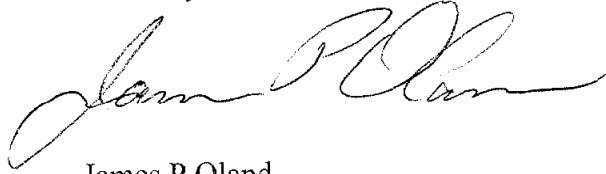
Please excuse the delay but enclosed are our comments on the Draft Soil, Groundwater, Surface Water and Sediment Background Investigation Report. We find the report to be well written and informative but not in laymen terms. There should be a summary of the report that details which metals were found and uses a reference to relate these levels to different water or sediment quality criteria. Since the majority of the area is composed of mangrove swamp, we recommend that for surface water, the PR EQB coastal and estuarine water quality criteria for the propagation and preservation of species that depend on that water body be used. We also recommend that metal levels in surface water be compared to the latest EPA freshwater aquatic life water quality criteria as well as ambient water quality criteria. Results for sediments should be compared to the NOAA national status and trends program. If possible, Vieques background levels should be compared with what is considered for be background in the main island of Puerto Rico or the continental US.

The summary should clearly indicate the results for all the metals in the different media sampled and how those results compare to the different quality standards and known background levels. This would provide to all readers a better idea of the quality of the soil, groundwater and surface water in western Vieques.

We agree with the report's conclusion that because of the geology of the area, there are certain metals that naturally occur in the different media found in western Vieques and that the mere presence of these metals does not constitute a level of contamination. However, elevated levels of these metals, even though they naturally occur in the area, may point to another source other than the parent material.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document, again, please accept my apologies for the delay. If you have any questions please contact Felix Lopez of my staff at 787-851-7297, ext. 26.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P Oland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Oland" clearly distinguishable.

James P Oland  
Field Supervisor

cc:

Vieques NWR, Vieques  
EQB, San Juan  
DNER, San Juan  
Winston Martinez, NSRR, Ceiba  
EPA, San Juan